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**Letter dated 24 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to forward herewith a self-explanatory letter addressed to you by His Excellency Dr. Charles Ghankay Taylor, President of the Republic of Liberia (see annex).

I would be grateful if this letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Neh **Dukuly-Tolbert**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

01-22608 (E) 240101

## Annex to the letter dated 24 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to present my compliments, and on behalf of the Government of Liberia, refer to the allegations as contained in the Report of the Panel of Experts appointed pursuant to Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), paragraph 19 in relation to Sierra Leone (S/2000/1195). The report alleges that I and my Government are engaged in and profiting from the sale of illicit diamonds from the Republic of Sierra Leone in exchange for the supply of arms and related war materiel to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). According to the report, amounts received from these sales have been in excess of US$ 200 million annually for the last few years.

These allegations are grave, especially as they are directed against both the President and the Republic of Liberia, a respected member of the international community. Liberia is a founding member of both the League of Nations and the United Nations, the successor body to the League of Nations. My country is also a founding member of continental and regional organizations, including the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union and the Non-Aligned Movement.

But most significantly, Liberia, the oldest independent African Republic, has remained in the vanguard of the liberation and independence of the African continent, and has maintained an active posture of resistance to acts of injustice, oppression and tyranny, not only in Africa but the rest of the world. This historical struggle impelled Liberia to institute legal proceedings against the apartheid regime of South Africa, at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. This is a proud legacy that I, the twenty-first President of the Republic, will never besmear.

In December of 1989, cognizant of this legacy, I, along with other compatriots, launched a civil insurrection to overthrow a military regime which had earlier dethroned the constituted Government and orchestrated the retardation of our nation. This action was one designed and executed when it was obvious that the junta was determined to maintain their hold on power against the wishes of the majority of the population.

This movement, which commenced with less than 100 civilians, galvanized momentum and eventually engulfed the entire country and gained the support of the people.

The discipline and commitment with which we led the national revolt ultimately ensured our success at the national plebiscite in July 1997. Although Liberia's civil strife obtained over a period of seven years and assumed broader dimensions than we imagined, our leadership of the movement was firmly opposed to any act of mayhem, maiming, rape and amputation. Along similar lines, the Government of Liberia is, therefore, opposed to and condemns all acts of mayhem perpetrated by RUF or any other belligerent group in the Sierra Leonean conflict. It is the view of the Government of Liberia that those individuals engaged in such inhumane acts be brought to justice.

This Government has never denied our knowledge of RUF. However, we have always rejected and continue to reject any claims that this contact is commercial or

economic in nature. Quite to the contrary, our relationship with RUF and our corresponding security concerns have been both publicly and privately expressed to the British and the United States Governments, the United Nations and ECOWAS. Our contact with RUF is an expected response to successive Sierra Leonean Governments' active support and arming of Liberian dissident groups resident in Sierra Leone. Indeed, at the time of writing armed Liberian dissidents are members of the official Sierra Leone Army and constitute almost 50 per cent of the Kamajors — a pro-Sierra Leone Government militia headed by Mr. Hinga Norman, Sierra Leone's Deputy Minister of Defense. These dissidents have stated and demonstrated that their objective is to overthrow the Liberian Government by force of arms.

Since 1998, Liberia has sustained four massive attacks from these same insurgents, now from the Guinean side, in collaboration with the Guinean Government. The loss of lives, displacement of the population and destruction of the entire northern region of Liberia have occurred without any condemnation from the international community. At the same time, an arms embargo, originally imposed by the Security Council in 1992 at ECOWAS' behest, is still in existence, although in 1997, with the inauguration of the democratically elected Government in Liberia, ECOWAS lifted the arms embargo and despite ECOWAS' recommendation to do so, the United Nations has refused. It is important to emphasize that the initial attack from Guinea occurred immediately after we complied with the international community demands and under United Nations supervision destroyed all the arms and ammunition left over from our civil war.

Mr. Secretary-General, the well known historical fact is that Liberia has always been a commercial point for Guinean, Sierra Leonean and Liberian diamonds, attracted by the fact that the United States dollar is legal tender in Liberia. This trade has never been government-controlled, sponsored or organized; it is carried out by Lebanese, Indians, tourists, Mandingoes, Julas and Fulas — ethnic groups with family links in Guinea, Mali, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Gambia and Côte d'Ivoire, who interact without regard to colonially established national boundaries. Liberia is, indeed, also a victim of this illicit trade and derives absolutely no benefit from same.

As earlier stated, the report claims the value of the trade by Liberia of illicit Sierra Leone diamonds to be in excess of US$ 200 million annually for the past few years. Clearly, the movement of such large amounts of money over a period of time would necessarily leave a trail because transactions would involve either cash, checks or bank transfers. Each of these would have to be documented, in the tradition of the venerated and reputable European banking system. It is reasonable to assume that if indeed I was or am involved in the sale of any diamonds for that matter, the money trail would inevitably lead to me.

Consequently, I request that the Security Council establish a blue ribbon panel to investigate and determine my ownership, if any, of any large personal funds, as a result of the diamond trade, in banks of any Member State, up to the time of publication of the report of the Panel of Experts, and by this declaration I waive all rights of non-disclosure to all banking institutions. In the event that it is determined that I own large personal funds in any foreign accounts, the information should be made public and the funds confiscated and transferred to the Liberian people. I have informed the Liberian National Legislature and the People of Liberia that, in the

event that this is found to be true, I shall resign my position as President of the Republic of Liberia.

However and correspondingly, I would expect and assume that having provided the Security Council this unique and unprecedented authorization, the Council will utilize this opportunity and expeditiously confirm the allegations of the Panel of Experts or publicly exonerate me and the Government of Liberia.

I request that you circulate this letter to members of the Security Council as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Dahkpannah Dr. Charles G. **Taylor**